

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 02229 01 OF 02 260715Z
ACTION AF-00

INFO LOG-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-00 SS-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 H-01 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 HA-09 L-03 TRSE-00
PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 INRE-00 USIE-00 SP-02 SNP-01
PRS-01 P-02 T-01 /043 W
-----135301 260921Z /24 38

R 260708Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0040
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY HARARE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 02229

DEPT FOR AF/S (HUGHES); LONDON FOR KOLKER;
CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PREL, BC, LT
SUBJECT: LESOTHO KING PAYS STATE VISIT TO BOTSWANA,
SPEAKS AT PRESS CONFERENCE

1. (U) SUMMARY. KING MOSHOESHOE II OF LESOTHO
WRAPPED UP A FOUR-DAY OFFICIAL STATE VISIT TO BOTSWANA
ON MAY 21 WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE STUDIOS OF
RADIO BOTSWANA. HIS MAJESTY'S VISIT, CLOSELY FOLLOWED
IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT-OWNED MEDIA, ENTAILED NUMEROUS
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PAGE 02 GABORO 02229 01 OF 02 260715Z

ACTIVITIES INCLUDING VISITS TO VARIOUS AREAS OF THE
COUNTRY, A STATE DINNER, AND A STATE RECEPTION WITH
ATTENDANCE BY THOUSANDS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,
DIPLOMATS, BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES, AND MEMBERS OF
THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THE VISIT MAINTAINED A POSITIVE
ASPECT THROUGHOUT, WITH THE KING OFTEN STRESSING THE
BROTHERHOOD OF BATSWANA AND BASOTHO, BOTH CULTURALLY

AND HISTORICALLY, AND IN THE FACE OF THE SPECTER OF APARTHEID. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) WHILE IN BOTSWANA, KING MOSHOESHOE MET WITH CABINET MINISTERS AND THE PRESIDENT, ATTENDED A STATE BANQUET AND STATE RECEPTION, AND TRAVELED TO ORAPA, MAUN, AND THE CHOBE NATIONAL PARK, AS WELL AS TO SITES CLOSER TO GABORONE. AT THE STATE BANQUET, BOTH THE KING AND PRESIDENT MASIRE SPOKE ABOUT THE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA OF APARTHEID AND THE MEASURES TAKEN BY SOUTH AFRICA TO MAINTAIN THAT "ABNORMAL POLITICAL ORDER" THROUGH MILITARY INTIMIDATION AND CROSS-BORDER RAIDS. THEY STRESSED THAT PEACE IS ESSENTIAL FOR COOPERATION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT THAT THE AFFAIRS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA "ARE SLIPPING DEEPER INTO A POOL OF MUDDY POLITICAL WATERS AND BLOODSHED." THE KING AND THE GOB ALSO ISSUED A JOINT COMMUNIQUE WHICH CONDEMNED APARTHEID AND SUPPORTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSC 435 ON NAMIBIA.

3. (U) THE FINAL EVENT PRIOR TO KING MOSHOESHOE II'S DEPARTURE FROM BOTSWANA WAS A HALF-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH HE ADDRESSED JOINTLY WITH PRESIDENT MASIRE. THE PRESIDENT WELCOMED HIS MAJESTY AND ANNOUNCED THE SIGNING OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN BOTSWANA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 GABORO 02229 01 OF 02 260715Z

AND LESOTHO TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT COMMISSION WHICH WILL MEET AS NECESSARY TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. HE ALSO REMINDED THE PRESS CORPS THAT THEY WERE DEALING WITH HIS MAJESTY RATHER THAN A POLITICIAN WHO IS USED TO THE "ROUGH AND TUMBLE" OF JOURNALISTS. THE KING EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE AT ALL HE HAD EXPERIENCED IN BOTSWANA, AND STATED THAT KINGS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE - EVEN MORE ORDINARY THAN PRESIDENTS. THE KING THEN ADDED HIS HOPE THAT THE PRESS WOULD BE EVEN GENTLER.

4. (U) HAVING BEEN ADMONISHED THREE TIMES TO BE GENTLE (BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, MARGARET NASHA, AS WELL), AND CONSIDERING A TENDENCY TO AVOID HARD QUESTIONS AT BOTSWANA PRESS CONFERENCES, THE PRESS CORPS NEVERTHELESS ASKED SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS. THESE INCLUDED WHAT TIMETABLE HAS BEEN SET FOR RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN LESOTHO, WHAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO DISMANTLE APARTHEID, THE STATUS OF BASOTHO LIVING OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY, WHERE THE CENTER OF POWER LIES BETWEEN THE MONARCHY AND THE MILITARY, AND WHETHER THE

LESOTHO LIBERATION ARMY HAS CEASED TO EXIST.

5. (LOU) THE KING FIELDDED MOST OF THESE QUESTIONS WELL, EVEN IF HE DID NOT ACTUALLY ANSWER MOST OF THEM. HIS RESPONSES CENTERED FOR THE MOST PART ON REPEATED STATEMENTS THAT ALL BASOTHO ARE INVITED TO RETURN TO LESOTHO, WHERE THEY WILL BE WELCOMED BY A GOVERNMENT OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT LESOTHO IS LAYING A FOUNDATION OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNMENT, STARTING ON THE VILLAGE, WARD, AND DISTRICT LEVEL, AND THAT CONCENTRATION OF POWER IN THE MONARCHY OR THE MILITARY COUNCIL IS NOT RELEVANT, SINCE THE POWER REALLY LIES WITH THE PEOPLE. BY RETURNING TO THESE POINTS REPEATEDLY, THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 GABORO 02229 01 OF 02 260715Z

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DEPT FOR AF/S (HUGHES); LONDON FOR KOLKER;
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E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PREL, BC, LT
SUBJECT: LESOTHO KING PAYS STATE VISIT TO BOTSWANA,

KING MANAGED TO TACTFULLY FIELD THE QUESTIONS WITHOUT
PLACING HIMSELF IN AN EMBARRASSING AND DANGEROUS
POSITION AT HOME.

6. (U) AFTER THE LAST QUESTION WAS ASKED, THE
PRESIDENT HELD UP THE DEPARTURE OF THE PARTY BY ASKING
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PAGE 02 GABORO 02229 02 OF 02 260717Z

HIS MAJESTY TO SAY GOODBYE IN SETWANA/SETSOTHO, WHICH ARE MUTUALLY INTELLIGIBLE LANGUAGES. THE RESULT WAS APPARENTLY A REPEAT OF SOME OF THE PREVIOUS COMMENTS, PUNCTUATED WITH LAUGHTER.

7. (LOU) COMMENT. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THIS WAS THE KING'S FIRST OFFICIAL STATE VISIT SINCE THE JANUARY 1986 SAG-INSPIRED COUP IN LESOTHO AND CERTAINLY THE KING'S FIRST VISIT TO BOTSWANA SINCE THE FUNERAL OF SIR SERETSE KHAMA, BOTSWANA'S FIRST PRESIDENT, IN JULY 1980. BOTSWANA'S DECISION TO INVITE THE KING TO VISIT PROBABLY REFLECTS A PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE BATSWANA AND THE KING AND THE PEOPLE OF LESOTHO RATHER THAN AN ACCEPTANCE OF LESOTHO'S NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT. IT IS VERY DOUBTFUL IF GENERAL LEKHANYA WOULD BE INVITED TO BOTSWANA. NEVERTHELESS, IT DOES INDICATE SOMEWHAT OF A NORMALIZATION OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES WHICH ARE RELATED NOT ONLY CULTURALLY, BUT IN THEIR DEPENDENT POSITION TO SOUTH AFRICA.

8. (LOU) THE KING ALSO CAREFULLY AVOIDED SAYING ANYTHING EVEN REMOTELY CRITICAL ABOUT LESOTHO'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND DID NOT ONCE IN ANY OF HIS PUBLIC ADDRESSES REFER TO GEN. LEKHANYA BY NAME. A PROMINENT JOURNALIST WHO HAD A "PRIVATE" MEETING WITH THE KING SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE A SERIOUS DISCUSSION WITH THE KING ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN LESOTHO BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF THE KING'S AIDES -- WHO APPEARED TO INHIBIT THE CONVERSATION.

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9. (LOU) THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS SERIOUS BUT PLEASANT, WITH BOTH THE KING AND THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 GABORO 02229 02 OF 02 260717Z

PRESIDENT SUCCESSFULLY ELICITING FRIENDLY LAUGHTER WITH COMMENTS INCLUDING THOSE ABOUT BEING GENTLE WITH HIS MAJESTY, WHICH WERE APPARENTLY MEANT SERIOUSLY, BUT WERE DELIVERED IN A TONE LIGHT ENOUGH TO AVOID ANY REAL DAMPENING OF THE POSITIVE SPIRIT OF THE OCCASION. THE ASKING OF SERIOUS QUESTIONS, DESPITE EXHORTATIONS TO BE NICE AND EXPECTATIONS OF LESS THAN COMPLETE ANSWERS, DID NOT PREVENT THE LOCAL PRESS FROM ASKING TOUGH QUESTIONS ANYWAY. END COMMENT. CARSON

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